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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRETORIA 000216

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [CVIS](#) [KTIP](#) [SF](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR GIPS MEETS WITH HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER
DLAMINI-ZUMA

REF: PRETORIA 2622

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) On January 26, Department of Home Affairs (DHA) Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma met with Ambassador Gips, DCM LaLime and PolOff (notetaker). The Minister welcomed bilateral cooperation, albeit with the proviso that SAG and USG interests be weighted equally. Her main requests were for U.S. guidance on immigration instruments (visas and permits as well as promotion campaigns) to attract skilled migrants, and on interagency integration at ports of entry (per the US/DHS model). On DHA's "turnaround" project (reftel), Dlamini-Zuma said the current focus was on "cleaning" the population rolls by registering all citizens and putting an end to late-birth entries that are sources of fraud. Coupled with new process controls to plug "leaks" in security, the Minister was confident of achieving integrity of SAG passports within a few years. Further, she was intent on changing the culture of Home Affairs from corrupt to service-oriented. Finally, Dlamini-Zuma affirmed South Africa was ready for the World Cup, with new passenger screening measures in place. End Summary.

USG-SAG Cooperation -- If Between Equals

¶2. (C) Dlamini-Zuma's advice to a new U.S. Ambassador was to understand South Africa and its ambitions, and to seek common interests rather than imposing U.S. priorities. Belying her reputation as fierce and formidable, the Minister was softspoken and smiling in this meeting -- articulate but gentle, candid but warm. Encouragingly, she described SAG-USG relations as building from 1994-99, then lapsed for eight years, and now with a potential to get back on track. Although readily armed with suggestions for bilateral cooperation, she stressed that this must be on an equal footing. "We all know America and its role in the world; you don't have to throw it in our faces. Most South Africans want partnerships and cooperation, but they can be sensitive when they have a sense of being bullied. (I haven't seen that lately.)" When the Ambassador noted Secretary Clinton's approach of asking and listening (not telling) during her August 2009 visit, the Minister responded approvingly: "This way you can raise tough issues and get to see the people you need to see.... Don't be shy to come and discuss with us, and to understand our point of view, even where we disagree." This opening meeting lasted nearly two hours.

Immigration to Attract Skills (U.S. a Model)

13. (U) Among possible areas of collaboration the Minister's top priority was a review of immigration instruments, specifically as a means to address skills shortages. So-called "scarce skills" encompassed a very wide range of professions, not just doctors and engineers but also plumbers, welders, and even artisans. South Africa wanted to attract skilled migrants, but it was not meeting its targets because it lacked the needed visa and permit structures. The SAG must address the issue more proactively, said the Minister, starting by studying the successful examples of high-immigration countries like the U.S., Canada, and Australia. In contrast to the range of targeted U.S. visas (especially the H1-V), SAG immigration relied mainly on a catch-all asylum-seeker's permit, leaving economic migrants without an alternative channel when they were refused refugee status. The Ambassador noted that professionals abroad were likely unaware of the SAG's desire for their skills, judging by queries from U.S. doctors unsure if they could obtain permission to work here. The Ambassador offered to find U.S. experts to advise Home Affairs officials.

Ports of Entry: Can USG Advise?

14. (SBU) The Minister's second request for U.S. guidance concerned the management of ports of entry. In particular, she wanted to understand the integration in airports of

PRETORIA 00000216 002 OF 003

interagency processes like passport checks, security, and customs. When the Ambassador explained how U.S. agencies were joined under the umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) after 9/11, the Minister said the SAG was in the process of forming an analogous body (an agency, not a ministry). Noting that DHS training to the SAG was ongoing, DCM LaLime volunteered to put the two sides in contact. The Ambassador further offered to contact DHS in Washington to locate relevant expertise. During the formative days of DHS, he suggested, its planners most likely conducted a survey of best practices around the world, such as the SAG was now seeking. As a next step, the two sides agreed to arrange a roundtable discussion between relevant agencies -- perhaps State and DHS for the USG; and the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), South African Revenue Service (SARS), and South African Police Service (SAPS) for the SAG -- to be followed by exchanges of visits to the two countries' ports of entry.

"Cleaning the Register" for Passport Integrity

15. (C) Asked about Home Affairs' operational "Turnaround" project, Dlamini-Zuma said her main focus for the next two years would be on cleaning the population register -- ensuring it was complete and correct for South African citizens, and purged of fraud and duplication. The priority here was registration of all citizens, beginning with minors 15 and under (who are targets for identity theft scams, before they apply for an ID card at age 16), then extending to all adults, and ultimately putting an end to the late birth registrations which are the main source of fraud. The birth certificate would also be expanded, to include the name and number of the mother, as an additional link back to the register. Henceforth the only point of entry onto the register would be at birth (when fraud is least likely). When that goal was reached, DHA would begin chasing down all records flagged as suspicious. The DCM noted that U.S. consular officials often encountered such cases (of non-nationals holding fraudulently obtained SAG passports) and were seeking a reliable DHA counterpart to act on them.

The Minister agreed it was important to share all such information with Home Affairs. The two sides agreed to establish a contact channel.

"Plugging the Leaks" in Processing Security

¶16. (C) Alongside the registration drive, Home Affairs was progressing well on tightening system and process controls to promote security and deter fraud. With the help of outside consultants, whose engagement with Home Affairs ended in December 2009, DHA had shifted from paper-based to electronic recordkeeping, with a central data base and real-time network links to its nationwide offices. Data capture was now online, with photographs taken on the spot (versus the former mail-in applications with paper photos) and fingerprints captured. More than 80 percent of the passport offices were now equipped with biometrics. (Services for migrants lagged those for nationals, however.) When these controls were fully implemented, closing off the "leaks" in the system, and the population register had been scrubbed clean with birth the only allowed point of entry, then Home Affairs would Qthe only allowed point of entry, then Home Affairs would undertake a campaign to recall, revise, and reissue the nation's identity documents. Dlamini-Zuma confided that although she was under political pressure to press for an end to the U.K. visa requirement for South Africans, she refused to do so until she was herself fully confident of the integrity of SAG passports.

"Transformation": Corruption Out, Service In

¶17. (U) Beyond boosting efficiency and security, Dlamini-Zuma spoke of changing the culture of Home Affairs, from one of "endemic" corruption to one oriented around customer service with appropriate controls in place. Bribes to DHA clerks were the norm far back into the apartheid era. Officials were known to sell "dormant" ID numbers (belonging to minors under 16 who had not yet applied for ID cards), and these IDs were then used to obtain passports. Investigators found "syndicates within syndicates" inside DHA, working in groups to use log-ons of officers on holiday to execute fraudulent transactions for which the absent individuals would be absolved. (These scams have now been blocked by the introduction of biometric log-ons along with password, for

PRETORIA 00000216 003 OF 003

positive identification of the author of any transaction.) Consultants have introduced an ethic of hard work, with feedback on performance. Asked whether she would recommend any particular DHA center as a model to visit, the Minister quipped that we should simply visit one at random and let her know our impressions. She welcomed the Ambassador's interest in visiting the new center at Pretoria showgrounds.

World Cup Security: Screening Air Travelers

¶18. (U) Asked about the World Cup, Dlamini-Zuma affirmed that Home Affairs was ready, including with new passenger screening measures. In certain hubs of flights bound for South Africa (e.g. in the UK, UAE, and Kenya), DHA would post line liaison officers to screen passenger manifests, running checks against Interpol lists and SAG watchlists. In this way, individuals of concern would be identified before arrival. Further, DHA was in talks with South African Airways (SAA) proposing to station immigration officers on board incoming flights, to process them before landing and enable them to proceed directly to baggage claim. With regard to the potential for human trafficking through South Africa, the Minister said that border officers had been trained to detect suspicious behaviors. Additionally, World

Cup fans would be asked to produce their tickets as proof of their purpose for travel. The National Defense Force (SANDF) would be deployed along borders, particularly at areas of most common illegal crossings. At airports, plans had been floated for special rooms to accommodate potential trafficking victims, with psychologists on hand to assist children.

Post Follow-ups

19. (C) Action items for post are:

(i) Immigration instruments: poloff to arrange a meeting between embassy officers (most likely Labor, DHS, and Consular) and DHA counterparts to discuss U.S. instruments and programs to attract skilled migrants. We will also invite officers from Canada and Australia to share their countries' approaches.

(ii) Ports of entry: poloff to put DHS in Johannesburg in contact with Minister's aide regarding ongoing training in South Africa. Ambassador to call his contacts at DHS in Washington to locate relevant expertise. Poloff to arrange a roundtable discussion between USG (DHS and State) and SAG (DHA, SARS, SAPS).

(iii) Suspicious passports: poloff to put Johannesburg consular officers in contact with Minister's aide to negotiate channels of communication on potential fraud cases.

(iv) Visits to DHA centers: poloff will continue ongoing visits to reception centers for non-nationals (within refugee portfolio), and arrange a visit for the Ambassador to the new "model" center for SA nationals in Pretoria.

GIPS